Amendments to the Claims:

The following is a listing of the claims which replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in

this application.

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of providing a signaling channel for performing

one or more signaling functions at <u>an</u> ~~the level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u> wherein telecommunication is

organized by information packets forming an information flow, the method comprises utilizing a

combined flow composed from said information flow and one or more service flows formed

from service packets being compatible with said information packets, wherein the service

packets belonging to a particular service flow carry indication of a corresponding one of said

signaling functions to be performed, while said one or more service flows form the signaling

channel at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u>.

2.   (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 1, for providing the signaling

channel at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u> between a first and a second operating points in a network

domain, <u>said first and second operating point being referred to as the two basic operating points,</u>

the method comprising steps of:

-          arranging at the first operating point a source <u>adaptation</u> element capable of

receiving the information flow from a first Ethernet device,

-        arranging at the second operating point a sink <u>adaptation</u> element capable of

transmitting the information flow to a second Ethernet device,

-        producing at the source <u>adaptation</u> element the service packets forming said one

or more service flows,

-        at the source <u>adaptation</u> element, merging said one or more service flows with

the information flow, thereby obtaining the combined flow with the signaling channel,

-        transmitting data comprised in the combined flow via the network domain from

the source <u>adaptation</u> element to the sink <u>adaptation</u> element,

-        at the sink <u>adaptation-</u> element, extracting the service packets of said one or more

service flows from said combined flow and processing said service packets, thereby performing

said one or more signaling functions.

3.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to Claim 2, wherein the step

of producing the service packets forming said one or more service flows is performed at the

source <u>adaptation</u> element based on at least one of the following two operations: monitoring the

information flow and monitoring external instructions.

4.   (original)   The method according to Claim 1, wherein said service packets

compatible with the information packets are suitable for multiplexing with one another.

5.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 2, further comprising

arranging one or more monitoring points between the first and second [[two]] operating points.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 2, comprising arranging

between said ~~two, basic,~~ two basic operating points at least one additional operating point

comprising one or more of an additional source adaptation element ~~and/or~~ and one or more of an

additional sink adaptation element, thereby forming two or more signaling channels between

said two basic operating points.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 2, wherein a span of the

network domain between said two basic operating points consists of segments which belong to

Ethernet only, thereby enabling creation of the combined flow in a [[the]] pure Ethernet

environment.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 2, wherein a span of the

network domain between said two basic operating points comprises at least one segment

~~segment(s)~~ of a transport network, the method further comprises preserving said signaling

channel during transmitting the combined flow via the transport network.

9.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising at

least one step from the following list:

- mapping packets of the combined flow into frames of a transport network for transmitting said <u>information and service</u> packets via the transport network,

- de-mapping frames of a transport network incorporating said combined flow, for separating thereof from said frames, thereby preserving the signaling channel at the Ethernet level.

10.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 8, further comprising the following steps:

- mapping packets of the combined flow into frames of the transport network for transmitting said <u>information and service</u> packets via the transport network,

- de-mapping frames of the transport network incorporating said combined flow, for separating thereof from said frames and processing, thereby preserving the signaling channel at the Ethernet level.

11.   (Currently Amended)   The method according to Claim 1, <u>wherein a service packet has a hearder, the method further</u> comprising <u>indicating</u> ~~indication of~~ a particular signaling function in the header of a service packet of said service packets, and providing data on said particular signaling function in <u>a</u> [[the]] data field of the service packet.

12.   (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim 1, wherein said one or more of the signaling functions are selected from <u>at least</u> the following ~~non-exhaustive list~~:

<u>a plurality of</u> performance monitoring functions including at least one Tandem

Connection function,

<u>a one</u> way and round trip delay measurement function,

<u>a</u> far end status function,

<u>a</u> connection integrity check function,

<u>a</u> buffer fill check function,

<u>a</u> function for enabling congestion indication and rate control.

13.   (Currently Amended) A source <u>adaptation</u> element for creating a signaling

channel for performing one or more signaling functions at <u>an</u> ~~the level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u>, capable

of:

-       receiving <u>the</u> Ethernet information packets forming an information flow,

-       producing one or more service flows of service packets compatible with said information

packets, wherein the service packets belonging to a particular service flow carry indication of a

specific signaling function to be performed, and

-       composing from said information flow and said one or more service flows an outgoing

combined flow with the signaling channel formed by said one or more service flows.

14.   (Currently Amended)   The source <u>adaptation</u> element according to Claim

13, wherein said one or more service flows are produced by a source function block based on

monitoring at least one of the following two: the information flow and external instructions.

15.   (Currently Amended) The source adaptation element according to Claim 13,

further comprising a mapping unit for transmitting the outgoing combined flow via a transport

network, thereby ensuring transmission ~~of said signaling channel~~ via the transport network.

16.   (Currently Amended)   A sink adaptation element for terminating a

signaling channel intended for performing one or more signaling functions at an ~~the level of~~

Ethernet level, the sink adaptation element is capable of:

-        receiving an incoming combined flow composed from an information flow of Ethernet

packets and one or more service flows formed from service packets compatible with the

information packets,

-        separating from said combined flow the one or more service flows and analyzing thereof

to perform said signaling functions respectively assigned to said service flows.

17.   (Currently Amended)   The sink adaptation element according to Claim 16,

further provided with a de-mapping block capable of obtaining said incoming combined flow

from frames of a transport network which envelope the combined flow, thereby ensuring

receiving the signaling channel via the transport network and analyzing thereof at the Ethernet

level.

18.   (Currently Amended)   An assembly for creating a first signaling channel

and for analyzing a second signaling channel, both first and second signaling channels intended

for performing one or more signaling functions at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u>, the assembly

comprising a source <u>adaptation</u> element and a sink <u>adaptation</u> element, wherein:

the source <u>adaptation</u> element <u>is</u> for creating the first signaling channel <u>and</u> is capable of

- receiving Ethernet information packets forming an information flow,

- producing one or more service flows of service packets compatible with said

information packets, wherein the service packets belonging to a particular service flow

carry indication of a specific signaling function to be performed, and

- composing from said information flow and said one or more service flows an

outgoing combined flow with the signaling channel formed by said one or more service

flows;

the sink <u>adaptation</u> element for terminating the second signaling channel being capable of

- receiving an incoming combined flow composed from information flow of

Ethernet packets and one or more service flows formed from service packets compatible with the

information packets,

- separating from said incoming combined flow the one or more service flows and

analyzing thereof to perform said signaling functions respectively assigned to said service flows.

19.   (original)   A system for providing a signaling channel for performing one or

more signaling functions at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet <u>level</u> in any network domain comprising

Ethernet, capable of performing the method according to Claim 1.

20.   (Currently Amended)   A system for providing a signaling channel for

performing one or more signaling functions at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet level , utilizing the assembly

according to Claim 18, wherein the first signaling channel and the second signaling ~~signalling~~

channel are ~~one and~~ the same signaling channel.

21.   (Previously Presented)   A method for providing a signaling channel for

performing one or more signaling functions at an ~~the level of~~ Ethernet level wherein

telecommunication is organized by information packets forming an information flow, the

method comprises

        utilizing a combined flow composed from said information flow and one or more service

flows formed from service packets being compatible with said information packets, wherein said

one or more service flows form the signaling channel at the ~~level of~~ Ethernet level, the service

packets belonging to a particular service flow carry indication of a corresponding one of said

signaling functions to be performed, and wherein said one or more of the signaling functions

enable achieving at least one of the following objectives:

        performance monitoring,

        far end status indication, including remote failure indication,

        remote loopback, including one way and round trip delay measurement,

        link monitoring, including connection integrity check,

        buffer fill check,

        congestion indication and

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rate control.